

All for One, One for All Romans 5:12-17

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Steve DeWitt

The title of my sermon is *All for One and One for All*. I don't think there has been a recent Three Musketeers movie, so this little phrase may be a bit new to our younger folks here. They were popular back in the day with various movies and stories in popular culture depicting three swashbuckling rogue defenders of truth and justice who used their wits and swords to win the day. When they got into an impossible situation, they would put their swords together and exclaim, "*All for one and one for all!*" and then go out and wipe out a whole ship of pirates. All for one and one for all.

It's not that different from what sports teams all the way up to the professionals do before games and after time outs. They put their hands together and say something together like, *Team! Unity! Let's roll!* Whatever. All of these are cries of solidarity. We are all in this together. If one of us is in, all of us are in.

This is a simple way to explain what Paul is saying in Romans 5:12-17. Simple is needed because this passage is hard to interpret. On top of that, what it is teaching is controversial on many levels. One highly respected scholar says about this passage, "every word—indeed, every punctuation mark!—is the subject of intense controversy."¹

This is unfortunate because the underlying truths here are wonderful, particularly in explaining why Adam's sin damned us all and how Jesus' cross can save us all. We like Jesus saving us all, but it feels very unfair that Adam's sin should condemn us all. There is a principle at work here. *All for one and one for all*.

I'm going to take the passage in parts. Hopefully nibbling the elephant will help us eat all of it.

"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..." (Romans 5:12 ESV)

Romans has already introduced us to the concept of sin. Sin is falling short of God's glory. Sin is moral rebellion against God. Sin is a destroyer of life and creation. Sin is man's refusal to worship his Creator and his determination to worship non-God material things; primarily worshipping himself. We've already seen that.

What 5:12 introduces rather controversially is not so much that when Adam sinned, sin entered the cosmos, nor that death is the result of sin. That's some of the oldest news of all. "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'*" (Genesis 2:16-17) Adam rebelled against God and his moral law and the result was exactly what God has warned, *you will die*. Adam ate. Adam died. Eve ate. Eve died.

What is new in Romans 5 is the end of verse 12, "*and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*" On the surface this seems straightforward. Adam sinned. We all sin. Therefore,

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: Romans*, p. 181.

we all die. If we stopped there, OK, we could take it that way. But Paul explains his own statement after this in terms of Adam's sin being a sin of headship. When Adam sinned, we all sinned with him. All for one and one for all. But in this case, we don't like it and in a sense, it doesn't seem fair. *Why am I guilty for what Adam did? I should have my own chance to sin and be condemned for it, thank you very much. I don't want one person being allowed to represent me! No. I want to be my own man with my own responsibilities for my actions!*

Do you? Are you sure about that? You don't want anybody representing you or all of us? Now we see the dilemma. This and many other places in Romans will provide two paths of interpretation. One that makes man the measure of what should be and the other God the measure of what should be. I'm going to urge here and everywhere else that we let God define what is fair and right and take Scripture for what it says. This will become clearer as we go. So, hang on.

"For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come." (Romans 5:13-14)

I'm going to illustrate this before I explain it. I don't normally do that, but I think it will help. A year ago, I got a speeding ticket. Over the years I have had my share of warnings and no one has accused me of being a slow driver. But I haven't been pulled over and paid for a ticket since 1991.

Honestly, it didn't really seem fair to me. I was down near Indianapolis. I had just left a pastor friend's house and turned out of his subdivision onto a four-lane highway to come home. Big highway. Median in the middle. It was dark out. I had hardly travelled any distance when a police officer pulled me over. I honestly didn't know what the speed limit was, and it was debatable whether I had gone far enough to even see a speed limit sign yet. She said she clocked me speeding. Was I guilty? How many say yes? How many say no? How many say speed limits are oppressive government overreach? We will keep our eyes on you.

This ethical question gets at what Paul is saying here and has said so far in Romans. The Gentiles are guilty by virtue of God's moral law written in the beauty of creation and our conscience. The Jews are guilty because they have the law of God and yet don't obey it. Adam had a command from God that he broke. It was therefore a transgression against a revealed law. He had a speed limit sign. But the rest of humanity until Moses had no speed limit signs.

So back to my speeding ticket. Was I guilty? Yes. I was technically breaking a law I didn't realize existed. If I knew the speed limit and was speeding, it would serve to heighten my guilt. Ever since God gave Moses the law, within its sphere of knowledge, mankind is both sinner falling short of God's glory AND lawbreaker violating the known and revealed law of God.

Look at the last clause, *"even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come."* (Romans 5:14)

A type or typology refers to things in the Old Testament which were foreshadows of things to come. They illustrated or gave the sense of something to be fulfilled in the New Covenant in a more spectacular way. So easy ones are what Hebrews describes regarding the temple

and the Levitical system. It's not that hard to see how killing a lamb for sin in the Old Testament was a type of the death of Jesus for all our sins. Or how the high priest in the temple representing Israel to God was a type or picture of Jesus representing us as our priest to God.

So how is Adam a type? *Adam was a type of Jesus by representing all of us when he sinned.* When Adam sinned, he was both a man and all men. We were all seminally in him when he sinned. It's like an animal who is the only one of his species. The Australian hippo (a made-up animal). There's only one Australian hippo. Whatever that one hippo does, all the Australian hippos do. Adam was a man and all men. So, when he sinned, he did so as the representative head and the sum of the entire race.

Theologians call this *federal headship* and *original sin*. I think *original sin* is a poorly titled doctrine. I much prefer Grudem's description of *inherited guilt*. We inherited Adam's guilt. Our Three Musketeers might more accurately say it, *One in all, all in one*. When Adam sinned as the first man and head of the whole human race, we all became guilty. From that point on, God regarded us as sinners even before we existed—the whole human race including future humans. This is hinted at in Romans 5:8, "*while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" Christ died for sinners and sins that didn't exist yet and we should be glad he did. Otherwise Jesus would have to come again and again to die for sins committed. No. He was able to die for sins not yet committed and sinners not yet alive.²

Now you may argue that, but in one sense, it doesn't matter if we are guilty through Adam's sin or guilty through our own personal sin, either way we are guilty and rightly condemned. I think only on this side of hell will this be debated. They won't be debating in hell, *are we here because of Adam or us?*

This gets to verse 14 and the reign of sin and death. While we may argue the universality of sin, the universality of death is without question. Everyone dies. Death has ruled ever since Adam. So much so that we take it as a given, but death is not the natural order. The Bible gives a straightforward answer to why death exists and why it is universal. We all sinned in Adam. We all sin in practice. The wages or payment for sin is death.

"But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:15–17)

If the bad news is that we all inherited guilt from our forefather Adam, the good news is that if one man can represent many other people, this means one person can represent us in dying for that guilt. If we can inherit guilt, we can inherit righteousness by the same principle.

This is the brilliance of God in how he parries sin and death into righteousness and eternal life. He takes the same principle of *all for one and one for all* and uses it to save us. In this case, it is Jesus who is the one and we are the all. I read somewhere that the story of

² See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 494.

humanity is the story of two men—Adam and Jesus. One’s sin brought misery. The other’s life and death brought forgiveness, justification, and eternal life for all who believe.

This comparison is precisely what Paul does now. He goes from the known devastation of Adam’s sin in the universality of death to the new and glorious truths of the gospel of Christ.

So, let’s go through this and build the comparison.

<u>Adam</u>	<u>Jesus</u>
<i>Trespass</i>	<i>Free Gift</i>
<i>Many Die</i>	<i>Many experience God’s grace</i>

"For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many." (Romans 5:15)

Sin is a stealer and destroyer. But Jesus represents a gift given by God and received by faith.

Judgment	Justification
Condemnation	

"For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification." (Romans 5:16)

Could there be any greater disparity? Adam brought judgment to the whole human race. Jesus brings justification by faith as a gift.

Reign of Death	Reign of Righteousness
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"For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17)

Paul will pick up this principle in a few verses (verse 20). Which is greater? Which is stronger? The sin of man or the grace of God? Where sin abounded, God’s grace abounded all the more. As the old hymn celebrates, *"Marvelous grace of our loving Lord, Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt."*³ God’s grace and Christ’s work is greater in its power to save than Adam’s sin was to condemn. This should be celebrated by us, every day.

How should we understand this? The best illustration I can think of is from rock climbing. Here in Indiana, to rock climb, you pretty much have to go to a building with pretend rock climbing. If I was preaching in Colorado Springs or Utah, everybody would be much more familiar with this.

In rock climbing, obviously, safety is a big issue. These guys that are free styling are crazy. Unless you are crazy, what do you use and trust when you are rock climbing? Ropes and carabiners. For safety, climbers climb in pairs or in groups. They tether themselves together with ropes and anchors. They are a team. Once they begin, what happens to one of them is the destiny for all of them. Why? They are tied in together.

³ Julia H. Johnston, "Grace Greater Than Our Sin" (1911)

If one of them were to slip, the others dig in their holds and pull the rope and they are able to anchor all the others. Together they carefully and systematically work their way up the face of the mountain.

What Romans is teaching us today is that Adam was our lead climber. He was the first climber. The first man. In the eyes of God, we all as humans were tethered to Adam. Where he went, we went with him. We often call Adam's sin, the fall. In this illustration, see it as Adam falling off the mountain of God's righteousness. Down he went and because we are all tethered to him, he took us down with him. The result was death for all mankind.

But then comes Jesus. What did Jesus do? Jesus goes to the bottom of that mountain where the ruined humanity all tethered together lie. He clipped in. He became one of us. And as the Son of God and perfect human being, he began to climb lifting with him all who are connected to him. It's not like we start climbing. No. We are dead in our sins. We are just dead weight. But he is God and Jesus climbs Mount Righteousness carrying on his back a ruined humanity.

We are condemned because we are tethered to Adam. We are saved if we are tethered to Christ and his death on the cross on our behalf. He is the second Adam. The true Adam. The one man for all that all through the one might be saved.

So, besides being interesting and theologically helpful to know, the real question is, who are you tethered to and where are you on the mountain? Are you still at the bottom in the wreckage of Adam? Or have you tethered to Jesus?

How do we tether to Jesus? By trust. Here is where the illustration is so good. If you've ever done any climbing with belay ropes, it's a huge trust moment. To trust the rope and come down you must believe it will hold you. You must trust the rope, the carabiner, and the belay.

Saving faith is like that. It is to put your personal trust in Jesus. Not just theoretically, but in kind of a trust fall that a belay rope requires. To trust that when Jesus died on the cross, he died for your sin. To trust that when Jesus was raised to life, he overcame the power of death over you.

So, who are you connected to? Adam or Jesus?

One final comment. When I got my speeding ticket I called the municipality to pay. They told me if I pay \$20 extra and don't get another ticket, it's removed from my record. So, as I stand here today, I'm no longer guilty of speeding in Whitestown, Indiana. A redemption by a price paid.

Speeding tickets. Carabiners. Climbing ropes. Romans 5. More Romans 5 next week.

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